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ABSTRACT

The community college professoriate is characterized by a large reliance on part-time faculty, faculty unionization, a drive for educational technology, and the tendency to become part of a practitioner's culture and undervalue intellectual exchange. College administrators and governing boards, for their part, may see themselves as making important decisions for the colleges, but, in fact, deal only with operational and procedural matters. The leadership paradigm chosen to execute these tasks can mean success or failure for college administrators. The hierarchical approach, with a strong and decisive president, may work well in a corporate structure, but can be disastrous in an academic setting. Since colleges are essentially democratic and decentralized institutions, faculty often inherently distrust anyone who seems eager to govern them. An informal poll of seven administrators at Ocean County College pointed to the importance of faculty and administrators sharing information and sharing the same institutional mission, while the general perception was that campuses functioned best when the people who inhabited them were involved in the decisions that affected their circumstances and were able to operate in free, open, and communicative climates. Contains 27 references. The questions used in the administrator poll are appended. (BCY)

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FACULTY / ADMINISTRATION RELATIONS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Princeton Mid Career Fellowship
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Faculty / Administration Relations in Community Colleges

I. Who Are The Participants/Players?

Here are some statistics that were gathered from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U. S. Department of Education. In just one generation community colleges expanded from only a few institutions to 1,024. They have become a major sector of postsecondary education by providing nearly universal access. They hire over a quarter million faculty members to provide education to 5.4 million students each year.

There is near parity in the share of men and women teaching in community colleges. Women made up almost half or 46%. Minority faculty members only make up 15% of the full-time faculty. Just over half, 52% of the full-time faculty had tenure and another 15% percent were on a tenure track. Community colleges hire more part-time faculty members than any other sector in higher education. According to this source, we are not as old as I had thought. Just over 10% of the full-time faculty members were 60 years or older. Seventy-six per cent were under 54 years old and

the rest were in between.

Let's move away from numbers and take a brief look at some of the forces that have shaped the community college professorate (McGrath & Spear, 1991).

. fairly large reliance on part-timers

. faculty unionization

. drive for educational technology

. the weakening and even the disappearance of courses beyond the intro level

. geographical fragmentation of colleges into numerous community sites

They (McGrath & Spear, 1991) continue with the premise that community college teachers can become part of a "practitioners' culture" and come to undervalue intellectual exchange and mutual criticism. And additionally, any conscious link between theory and practice is broken.

Institutional administrators and governing boards may be seen by themselves and others as making the important decisions for colleges. In fact, they deal only with operational and procedural matters (Ashworth,1993). The way in which the tasks are executed is often the source of conflict between the college president and the faculty (Bing and Dye, 1992). It is often the choice of paradigm used for leadership rather than the actual event that fuels the central conflict. The most common cause of a failed college presidency is taking precipitant action, with either token or no consultation. It can involve a task-oriented, rational managerial act, but one that appears insensitive to

the human aspects of the organization. The president notifies the faculty but did not negotiate or involve the faculty in the process (Birnbaum, 1992). A classical hierarchical system of governance focused on the "effective" college president who is strong, decisive, and silent. This president listens to constituent groups, yet boldly makes decisions and imposes them. The implication is that faculty members were either not to be trusted or unable to deal with issues in a positive fashion. In a college, the solitary decision-making process erodes any sense of community.

Hierarchical systems are powerful and can be effective in organizations like the military and a variety of large corporations. However, they are disastrous in the academy. In a hierarchical model of governance, people learn quickly to tell leaders what leaders want to hear. No one introduces new insights. The process of critical, public examination declines and the result is a loss of vitality and a lack of responsiveness (Bing and Dye, 1992).

If a president is a leader, then she or he must be open to collegial governance and be astute and courageous enough to teach others how to achieve it. Presidents with high support were judged by their faculty leaders as being both technically competent and concerned with people as well as organizational tasks (Birnbaum, 1992)). These presidents were seen as working within established governance structures; accepting faculty participation in decision making, being concerned for process and as having a strong sense of values that were consistent with the purposes and missions of the institution. And when they acted contrary to the faculty will they did

so in a manner that reflected their respect for the faculty and for the process.

LEADERSHIP AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

College presidents with high support were seen as:

a. Accepting faculty participation in decision making

b. Being concerned for process

c. Having a strong sense of values that were consistent with the purposes and missions of the institution

d. Seeing the college mission as a means to achieve some larger purpose

.Advancement of knowledge

.Provision/educational opportunity

.Inculcation of ethical values

e. Being seen by others as fair and ethical

f. Keeping promises once they had been made

g. Not being afraid to tackle controversial problems

h. Stating thair positions clearly

i. Being forthright when they acted contrary to the faculty will

(Birmbaum, 1992)

These criteria challenge the human frailties of most qualified academic leaders. It seems a genuinely popular academic administrator is really a contradiction in terms.

The central conflict between the college president and the faculty is not always concerned with the allocation or reduction of resources, as is the frequently the stated rationale. Rather, it is often the choice of paradigm used for leadership (Bing & Dye, 1992). The Fisher & Tack paradigm described a classical hierarchical system of governance focused on the "effective" college president who is strong, decisive, and silent. This president listens to constituent groups, yet boldly makes decisions and imposes them on the university community. Fisher & Tack took a dim view of the idea of a collegial institution. They labeled leaders of such institutions "representative presidents," implying that they were mere figureheads. By contrast, they described the ideal president as a silent actor who rarely revealed the reasons for decisions. Explanations, when offered, were to be done in "carefully selected language." The implication in this model is that faculty members were either not to be trusted or unable to deal with issues in a positive fashion.

As in other hierarchies, it was considered more important to engender respect for authority than to foster collegiality (Bing & Dye, 1992). The problem is that campuses do not function as hierarchies. People don't behave as they are supposed to in a chain of command. (Walker, 1986) Hostility, misunderstanding and stereotyping are the result. When things go wrong, administrators blame the breakdown of misbehaving, impractical and petty professor or students influenced to mischief. Freedman argues that much of this mutual disrespect has its origins in the excessive expansion of higher education that began in the 60's. In the years that followed, new

colleges sprang up virtually anywhere there was hope that the population could support them (Freedman, 1987). Campus Administration became a distance vocation, with its own national associations. Many others confused the academic hierarchy with the hiercharchies of other organizations, and acquired all the worst attributes of the bureaucrat, including high-handed incompetence (Freedman, 1987).

LEADERSHIP AND THE FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

At many academic institutions today, faculty seem to regard administrators as natural enemies rather than as colleagues in a common enterprise. This mutual antagonism between faculty and administration is rooted in the nature of American colleges and Universities. Colleges are essentially democratic and highly decentralized institutions. There are varying degrees of power and authority delegated to the president, provost, the deans, the faculty senate, college faculties, departments, special committees, faculty unions and other officials and groups (Diner, 1985). Those of us in higher education have a love affair with the participatory process. Tenure allows academicians to oppose administrative initiatives and to criticize top officials without fear of losing their jobs (Diner, 1985). Faculty view administrators as petty and expedient tyrants, bureaucratic, overbearing, unreceptive, and cowardly. The entire operation becomes a game of cops and robbers. (Walker, 1986)

Faculty members, in general, recognize a professional responsibility to protect faculty initiatives at all levels of sharing in academic government. This takes a

substantial amount of time and is not merely busy work. There is an underlying belief that faculty and administration should share in developing the broad outlines of institutional policy (Williams, 1987). Many faculty feel that active participation in the policy-making process is essential to over bureaucratization.

COLLABORATION AND FOCUSED SUPPORT

Today's colleges and universities may not be self-governing communities of scholars, but neither are they neatly organized, hierarchical bureaucracies We (faculty) inherently distrust those who seem eager to govern us. Our ideal administrator is one who reluctantly assumes the position out of obligation to the university and who eagerly anticipates returning to teaching and research. (Diner, 1985).

Most academic administrators came from the teaching ranks; they were offered administrative posts in part because faculty peers sanctioned their reputations for excellence and proper sensibilities. Does something get altered once they assume the mantle? Do they change their basic characters and forget their previous training and orientation entirely? Or are faculty members merely petulant complainers who really prefer anarchy to any form of government? (Walker, 1986)

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE INSTITUTION (OWNERNSHIP ...ACCOUNTABILITY?)

Faculty members in the decade of the 1990's are expected to contribute to departmental, college, and university committees and activities in addition to the more

traditional roles of research and instruction (Miller,1993). This type of participation is recognized as being fundamental to the continued operation and maintenance of the college. But many faculty have difficulty justifying the commitment of their personal resources if the result is only advisory (Miller 1993.) There is no additional compensation for their efforts, and some faculty have begun to resist participation on faculty committees. With few rewards for participation in governance, especially in terms of credit for tenure decisions, faculty have developed a resentment for working on campus committees. "Most faculty are really interested in teaching and research and would just as soon leave the administration of the institution to the administrators." (Baldridge and others, 1978, p. 75)

A number of faculty members have had some experience and frustration with committees. But at the same time expressed that some continued involvement on committee work was a necessity for at least being perceived by the administration as contributing to the institution's operation and success. (Miller, 1993)

Chairpersons have noticed this phenomena with some concern. Both the lack of involved attitude and the actual reduction of faculty input reduces the likelihood of developing a culture of ownership, which is crucial to policy acceptance. Benefit of institutional affiliation by faculty has historically been described as a side-effect of participation in institutional governance. Maehr & Braskamp (1986) noted that affiliation plays an important role in work motivation.

Many faculty members have noted that by their involvement, feelings of affinity toward the institution have been created and subsequent increased "care" for the employer arises. (Miller, 1993) So perhaps it could be inferred that the participation of faculty in the operation of the institution can provide a very real sense of ownership and mutual concern among administrators and faculty. Some feel it is their responsibility to become involved in governance and that they could "enhance" the quality of the institution through this type of participation. But some administrators may disagree with the contention that faculty participation is entirely a good thing. Increasing the number of players in the decision making process and decentralizing the authority to make decisions can slow the already judicious process of administrative resolution.

Few sensible people would contend that faculty members should run the campuses on their own; as professors, they have enough to do already. What is needed at most institutions is a return to mutually respectful collegiality between faculty and administration (Freedman, 1987). To some extent, the good guys-bad guys scenario is inevitable. Its tough for people who feel strongly about an issue to accept the fact that there are no easy fixes, that a kind heart and a good head aren't going to make the problems go away. Resentments result. Some antagonism between constituent groups in complicated organizations is therefore, inevitable and probably even healthy. (Walker, 1986)

No one who has worked in a college can doubt that it is an inherently political institution. "If we love politics and participatory democracy, In good Madisonian tradition we also distrust authority." (Diner, 1985, p. 60) Professors suspect others in the college and indeed, in their own department, of harboring aspirations for the institution that differ from their own. Hence, they firmly believe they must maximize their personal control over the institutional conditions under which they work. Distrust of the motives of certain other faculty and administrators, therefore abounds. And faculty, by virtue of our education and proclivities that brought us to academic careers in the first place, are uniquely adept at finding fault with things and articulating our criticisms (Diner, 1985). We are a verbal and analytical lot. If we use these skills daily to explain or examine natural and human phenomena, certainly we will also employ them to highlight the short-comings of our institutions, administrators and colleagues.

Faculty members are entrepreneurs of a sort with the "tools of production" in their own heads. The talents they possess must be conjured rather than commanded. For campuses to work best, there must be the freedom for talented and trained people to use independent judgment...(at least until it interferes with the work of others) (Walker, 1986). Campuses function best when the people who inhabit them are involved in decisions that affect their circumstances and when they are able to operate in institutional climates that are free, open, and communicative. This was the consensus of the seven administrators that I polled on my own campus. I distributed my list of questions to approximately nine different "administrative types" to ensure a

variety of views. Seven of them wrote extensive answers and conveyed a deep concern for the status of faculty/administrative relations at Ocean County College. I was encouraged to sense the extent of their regard for this issue. I had given the list of eight groups of questions to each and asked that they respond to the one group that resonated with them. Some of them answered all of them, which was enlightening and took more of their time than I intended. But most of them followed the directions and responded to one group in greater depth. What pervaded their answers was the value of shared information between faculty and administration, an acceptance of alternative perspectives regarding the information and the need for mutual respect. The other consistent point made by all was that we all share the same mission. There were honest revelations about some of the frustrations with ongoing conflicts, but even then a recognition that these problems did not interfere with the ability of faculty to deliver "excellent, even exceptional education" to their students.

Campuses function best when the people who inhabit them are involved in decisions that affect their circumstances and when they are able to operate in institutional climates that are free, open, and communicative. The task of administrators, then is not to punish the wicked or control the unsteady so much as it is to create an institutional climate in which good things can take place (Walker, 1986). Most deans, academic vice presidents, and presidents have risen from the ranks of the faculty, and at one point in their careers, at least, have shared the deep-seated faculty values of individualism, professionalism, and faculty control over academic matters.

But service in an administrative position changes this perspective-not, as some argue, because power corrupts, but rather because the imperatives of the position force one to view the world through different lenses (Diner, 1985). There are few of us in teaching who wish to be bothered with the minutiae of administration. Many prefer to leave the final disposition of most decisions to trustees or administrators. But what faculty members do require is that their views be heard and taken into account in the making of plans and policies (Kamber,1984).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A college is about the courses that are taught. Collegiality is a term that arises from that; we are all at our respective colleges to do one job. There is a notion of Community that has the power to bring the "we" and the "they" together. But what is our community at the Community College? In seminar it was mentioned that Bergen hired thirty new faculty recently. To what community were they hired? Are they faculty employees only? How does the affluence of their surrounding geographic community effect the notion of community? Today's education for administrators is managerial only, it is not usually grounded in a discipline. I have observed this in hospital administration over the last several years. Without the groundedness in some aspect of health care as a part of one's basic education, a wider gulf develops between the hospital managers and the workers. Communications have that distant clang of speaking to and through interpreters. Maybe that is just the way things are. Some of

us are on the inside, some of us are on the outside and we come from different perspectives. Can we have open dialogue on the polarities of our stances? I think it is possible. At my own college our president regularly has informal coffee hours where all manner of topics are discussed. For the past three years we have had three to five hour retreats in a setting away from the campus. The idea and implementation came from one of our senior faculty members. They have been well planned and open to all. This past Spring, the cost was picked up by the College. Over the past three years, faculty professional development monies have been reallocated with many more choices offered to the individual person regarding their disbursement. So, I am hopeful. And it is this hope I hold that led me to choose this topic. However, the background reading for this paper did not often fuel my hope. There was a fairly consistent good guy/bad guy scenario that permeated the articles. So is my hope based in my own naivete`? I am no youngster in either actual years or years as a faculty member in a college system. I think my hope is based in belief in a greater good. About education being available to persons without a family history or support or funds for further learning. I realize this sounds like a Community College Mission Statement and that is OK with me. I like to reread parts of those ideas annually. It keeps me grounded in what we're all about. All of us, the we and the they, bring our energies and our abilities to our teaching institutions to "do our thing." We need to turn some of our verbal proclivities and analytical capacities to the business of understanding each other's perspectives (Diner, 1985).

APENDIX A

Questions used for exploration:

1. How important is it for faculty to have a strong identification with their institution? How does a faculty member prioritize between their discipline career and their institutional career?

2. Could ceremonies and rituals (more common in four year colleges) help to strengthen the culture of the community college? Do symbolic events have a place in the community college setting? Could the participation in certain traditional activities help faculty and administrators to feel more of a shared mission?

3. Is the notion of community "alive and well" at your community college? When you think of community in that context, who is included?

4. How important is the willingness to share information between faculty and administration? What level of detail regarding institutional decisions is needed for faculty to be a part of the decision-making process?

5. Has the power of your Board of Trustees changed with the loss of the Board of Education in Trenton? How has that impacted on the faculty-administration relationship? Does your governance system provide any regular contact between faculty and the college Board of Trustees?

6. Have you ever participated in a large community college project that enriched your collegial and administrative relationships? Did this have an effect on your work?

7. Has your community college ever faced some real adversity and overcome the challenge it presented? How did that effect the atmosphere/morale of faculty and administrators?

8. Have you functioned as a faculty member with more than one type of leadership? Have you ever been in a setting you would describe as having participatory leadership? How does the type of leadership effect your role as a faculty member?

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